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INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 3361
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 005733

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/06/2016

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SUBJECT: PRT JALALABAD - DIFFERING VIEWS ON THE CROSS
BORDER JIRGA

Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR MARTIN MURPHY FOR REASONS 1.4
(B) AND (D)

¶1. (SBU//RELS NATO/ISAF) Summary: While meeting with Provincial Council Chairman Fazlhadi Mslimyar, PRT officials were introduced to three Pakistani journalists visiting Jalalabad and Kabul to discuss the proposed cross border jirga. In a lively discussion, two of the Pakistanis and the Afghan Council Chairman expressed widely differing views on the cross-border jirga with Pakistan. End summary.

¶2. (SBU//RELS NATO/ISAF) Chairman of the Nangarhar Provincial Council Fazlhadi Muslimyar invited PRT officials to his office for a meeting November 26 to discuss various topics. While there, a group of three Pakistanis journalists on a fact finding mission for the proposed cross border jirga joined in the meeting, and a lively discussion ensued. The Pakistanis included: Hasan Khan, Controller of Current Affairs and host of a well known Pashtun TV political program "Current Affairs" for the AVT Channels in Islamabad, also known as Khyber TV; Aimal Khatak, son of former Pakistani Senator Ajmal Khatak, an opposition politician and Pashtun nationalist; and Noor Rehman "Shirzad", a correspondent for the AVT Channel. (Comment: President Karzai has mentioned the Pashtun Khyber TV as an important player in the cross border jirga.) Shirzad did not speak, but Khan, Khatak, and Muslimyar all expressed both hopes and concerns about the proposed jirga.

¶3. (SBU//RELS NATO/ISAF) Khan described their visit to Jalalabad and Kabul as a trip to "cover prospects for the jirga, and to see how the people in Afghanistan feel about it." He said that they would go to the Pashtun regions in Pakistan next. Khan did not think that the jirga would be a single event with immediate results, but rather "a good exercise" and the start of a longer process that would continue until all disputes were resolved. He confided that he is optimistic, but that he has found apprehensions on both sides of the border. He pointed out that the social landscape of the region has changed, as the

long tradition of tribal society is now being influenced by money and power outside of this traditional structure.

¶4. (C//RELS NATO/ISAF) PRT Commander asked what the actual conflict or issue to be addressed by the jirga will be, and whether it will really be a jirga to reach a resolution of a problem, or a shura that would simply promote discussion. Provincial Council Chairman Muslimyar said that Pakistani President Musharraf would come to Afghanistan first, followed by Afghani President Karzai going to Pakistan. Both sides would sit together to come up with solutions, and the US and UN would only be observers. Muslimyar said that both sides crave the same things, including identifying their mutual enemies and improving security on both sides of the border, no matter where the problems come from. He believes that the Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) is supporting a large insurgency in Afghanistan and asked the US to put pressure on Pakistan to end this. He also said that based on the years that he lived in Pakistan, he found that some Pashtuns there, including those in the Punjab areas, do not think of themselves as Pakistanis.

¶5. (SBU//RELS NATO/ISAF) Pakistani journalist Khan said that there is a "low level of excitement" about the jirga in Pakistan. Khatak noted that they have not made any preparation for it there. (Comment: PRT Afghan employees confirmed that they see much more interest in the jirga among people in Afghanistan than on the other side of the border in Pakistan.) Khan

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said that Pakistanis are interested, but Afghan President Karzai is trying to include too many people in the process. He said that it should involve the people actually in the conflict first, with the warring tribes coming forward. He complained that Karzai is trying to expand it too much so that it would become only a public meeting with speakers, possibly even using Urdu or English rather than Pashtu. Khan feels the jirga should be a Pashtun to Pashtun event, with priority given to those currently involved in the conflicts. Following this, it could be expanded to include others who have an interest in the area.

¶6. (SBU//RELS NATO/ISAF) All three agreed that "foreigners" or "outsiders" are a big part of the problem, though they did not exactly agree on who these foreigners are. Muslimyar said that Pashtuns have no conflict among themselves, and any Pashtuns involved in the conflict have been trained by outsiders. Khatak said that "non state actors" are causing the conflict, suggesting these are foreign fighters from other countries such as Tajikistan or Chechnya. Khan agreed that "foreigners" are the problem, and the ones who are causing trouble on both sides of the border. He said that Pashtuns can always tell whether a person is Pashtun or not, even if they do not know the person. He also pointed out that the jirga is an Afghan tradition that foreigners do not have, so there is the question of which "foreigners" would be allowed to attend the event.

¶7. (SBU//RELS NATO/ISAF) PRT Commander asked how any agreement reached at the jirga would be enforced. Pakistani politician Khatak said that would be problem. He noted that the "disruptive foreigners" currently in the Pashtun areas could not be there now without the support of the people. The Taliban had been allowed to re-emerge, and he asked who could enforce jirga decisions if the population is not controlling the Taliban now. He declared that one-man

rule and lack of a democratic system in Pakistan is a big part of the problem, and asked why the western powers allow this to continue. Hassan agreed that it would be much easier to handle the "foreigners" in a democracy.

18. (SBU//RELS NATO/ISAF) Comment: Though the initial excitement in the province has cooled and the jirga process is no longer the leading story in the press, there is still interest and discussion about what form the jirga might take or what results could be expected. No conclusions or agreement were reached during this meeting, and the three Pakistanis left the meeting to head to Kabul for four more days of interviews and discussions. End comment.

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